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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004306

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: AYATOLLAH SADR SAYS MARJAYA SHOULD STAY OUT OF POLITICS

Classified By: CHARGE D, AFFAIRES DAVID M. SATTERFIELD FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

11. (C) Summary. At an October 17 iftar, Ayatollah Hussein al-Sadr told Ambassador Khalilzad that the Shia clerical establishment (Marjaya) should not endorse any electoral lists in the December 2005 elections. Al-Sadr warned the Ambassador of the danger of Islamic extremism and said that he favors cross-sectarian political alliances. Sadr also complained about the Iraqi Security Forces' (ISF's) inability to secure Iraq's borders. End Summary.

The Dangers Of Extremism

12. (C) Ayatollah Hussein al-Sadr told the Ambassador that religion and politics should not mix. "If a religious man enters politics, it spoils both of them," he said, adding that the only role religion should play in politics is as a spiritual "advisor to all." Al-Sadr noted that care should be taken to make sure religion does not become a political tool, for this opens the door to religious extremism. Islam, he said, gives power to the people, not political leaders. Accordingly, he argued, the Marjaya should only encourage other Iraqis to participate in the political process. The Ambassador agreed that involvement in politics would benefit neither the Marjaya nor Iraq's political process.

13. (C) Al-Sadr continued by saying that religious extremists are trying to divide Iraqi society. It is necessary, he said, to build an Iraq that is "bigger than the sects," in which Iraqis of all stripes can live and work together. The best waQto do this, he said, is to build cross-sectarian political alliances, which would eventually lead to cross-sectarian political parties. Iraqis must think of themselves as Iraqis, not as Kurds or Shia or Sunni Arabs.

Ayad Allawi: Man Of The People

14. (C) According to Sadr, the best person to lead such an alliance would be Ayad Allawi. Allawi, Sadr said, would be capable of bringing together Iraqis from across the political spectrum. If sectarian parties are elected, Sadr warned, then whole ministries would "belong" to a sect. This, he warned, is one of the biggest drawbacks of the current Iraqi government.

Broken Borders

15. (C) Sadr complained that ISF are not adequately equipped or trained and are therefore unable to protect Iraq's borders. He said that as a result, Saudi Arabia had to station 30,000 Saudi troops along its border with Iraq in order to protect Iraqis. The Ambassador countered that building an Iraqi army from scratch will take time and that good progress has been made.
Satterfield